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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-2109

April 12, 1995

Bill Clinton
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing to express my very deep concern over our government's policy towards Cuba and current efforts in the Congress to make that policy more restrictive. It is my view that our policy is outdated and is only serving to prolong the reign of Fidel Castro.

While I do not question the lofty motives of those in the Administration and those in the Congress who seek to tighten economic and diplomatic sanctions against Cuba, I do question the wisdom and effectiveness of such moves.

We have tried for over three decades to force Mr. Castro from power by maintaining a tight economic embargo on his country. But, that embargo has failed to hasten Castro's departure and has failed to fuel the type of internal pressures to advance the democratic reforms that so many of us want to see.

Instead, the embargo has encouraged and strengthened the sentiments of nationalism in Cuba, provoked an increase in immigration to the United States -- and it has provided Mr. Castro with the perfect excuse to justify the failures of his system.

I strongly support members of the Cuban exile community here in the United States who have courageously and steadfastly reminded the world of Mr. Castro's atrocious record on human rights. And I have joined with them on many occasions petitioning the Cuban government on behalf of political prisoners and to urge a greater respect for human rights.

The U.S. State Department's current human rights report and the 1995 Human Rights Watch Report document quite clearly the severity of the human rights situation in Cuba. From systematic harassment of political dissidents to arbitrary arrests -- the Cuban people continue to suffer.

PLEASE RESPOND TO:

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SUITE 220
BOSTON, MA 02210
(617) 565-2920
(617) 439-5460
FAX: (617) 439-5157

4 COURT STREET
TAUNTON, MA 02780
(508) 824-6676

BROCKTON FEDERAL BUILDING
166 MAIN STREET
BROCKTON, MA 02401
(508) 586-5555

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But other than congressional letters and moral appeals, we have little power to monitor, investigate or influence the human rights situation because we have almost no formal communications with the Cuban government.

Proponents of a more hard line policy towards Cuba have argued that more sanctions and more saber-rattling will produce the necessary chaos to force Castro's retirement and thereby fix all that's wrong about Cuba. But, the way I see it, more chaos is not what Cuba or its people need.

Chaos, turmoil or civil war will not necessarily mean democracy, better respect for human rights or freedom for Cuba.

More chaos could mean bloodshed; it could mean strengthening Castro; it could mean replacing him with a dictator on the right; or it could mean more refugees fleeing the island for the United States.

The late President Nixon, in his last book, wrote, "The plain fact is that...the hard line against (Mr. Castro) has failed to get rid of him." The best hope for doing that, he added, is "to build pressure from within by actively stimulating Cuba's contacts with the free world."

I believe our former President was exactly right.

The best way for us to push for democratic reforms and impact the human rights situation in Cuba is through negotiations and economic relations. It is not by continuing a policy that has not worked for over 30 years.

It is my view that democratic transitional government and democratic elections will more likely occur if the United States exposes Cubans to the ideas of democracy and free trade.

Past history has demonstrated that the most efficient road to democracy is exposure not isolation. A perfect example of this is the former Soviet Union -- in which individual contact through academic exchange programs, relaxed travel restrictions and free trade promoted a legitimate democratic movement.

In addition, ultimately easing trade restrictions with Cuba will provide numerous opportunities for businesses -- from Massachusetts to California -- to expand trade, increase their profits and create jobs. Currently, some of our closest allies, including Israel, Spain, Canada and Japan have active business and trade operations with Cuba -- while U.S. businesses, only 90 miles away, are limited to exploratory missions.

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If current efforts to tighten the trade restrictions are enacted in this Congress, the U.S. business community will continue to be at a disadvantage in a country that is at our doorstep. Studies have shown that close to \$2 billion could be gained in U.S. exports to Cuba. In addition, Cuba has an untapped market of 11 million people, as well as a highly educated work force that could easily adapt to U.S. product and service industries.

I would respectfully suggest that the Administration begin the process of exploring an alternative to our current Cuban policy and commence formal negotiations with the Cuban government aimed at normalizing relations. I believe, at this late date, such a course makes the most sense for the Cuban people and for the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



John Joseph Noakley